

Angel Whispers

WINTER, 2012

*Angel Whispers
Newsletter is a resource
for parents who have lost
a baby during pregnancy
or shortly after birth.*

*Meetings are held in
Sherwood Park and Fort
Saskatchewan.*

*For meeting information,
or to receive our
newsletter or a special
care package, please call
780.998.5595,
ext. 225.*

*You can also reach us by
email at
angelwhispers@
familiesfirstsociety.ca
or visit our website at
www.angelwhispers.ca/
angelwhispers.*



www.familiesfirstsociety.ca

Happy Holidays To All Our Angel Whispers Families!

As the holidays approach, many of you may be finding it hard to feel much happiness as you are missing your precious baby. For some of you, this may be your first Christmas since your loss and you may be feeling reluctant to celebrate the holidays this year.

This newsletter is dedicated to all of our Angel Whispers families and to your cherished angel babies! My hope for you is that you will find comfort in the following pages of poems and stories.

Included in this edition you will also find ways to honor your baby at Christmas as well as tips on how to cope with the holidays, including an article for you to share with friends and family on how they can help you through this time of year!

My wish for you and your loved ones is that this Christmas is a season filled with peace, love and hope. May you feel the love and presence of your angels with you each and every day through the holidays. And may the New Year bring happiness and hope for the future to you and your families!

With Love and Understanding,

Lori-Ann

*Lori-Ann Huot
Program Coordinator
Angel Whispers Baby Loss Support Program
(780)998-5595 ext. 225
angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca*

Coping Through The Holidays After The Loss Of Your Baby

by: Lori-Ann Huot

The holidays are a difficult time of the year when you are grieving. When you have lost a baby, the thought of celebrating Christmas, especially if your loss is recent, is too much to bear for many families. Holidays are meant to be shared with loved ones, and yet when a loved one as significant as your baby is missing, it can be too difficult to imagine a Christmas without them.

For some, skipping Christmas may feel like the best option, although there are many things to be considered when making a decision to not celebrate the holidays:

- Express how you are feeling to your family, explain that it's too difficult to face the usual traditions and that you're hoping that next year may be easier.
- Be gentle with yourself, remember that it's ok to experience moments of joy and happiness. Don't feel guilty if you find

Continued on page 2



yourself smiling or laughing. You are not disrespecting your baby by allowing yourself to enjoy life.

- Decline invitations – no explanation is necessary, friends and family will understand.
- Make shopping easy – consider online shopping for those that you need to buy gifts for and avoid the holiday bustle of the stores.
- Find a balance between staying busy and having time to yourself – try to plan a few activities that you enjoy. Grief can be very lonely, try not to add to those feelings of loneliness by isolating yourself.
- Take a vacation – a trip away may be the best way to remove yourself from the traditions that are too difficult to face. You may want to travel away as a couple or perhaps consider inviting family to join you. Consider a travel destination where Christmas isn't celebrated. If a vacation isn't possible, consider taking on a project around your home to keep you busy.
- Do something special to remember your baby, continue reading for ideas on honoring your baby.

If you chose to attend holiday gatherings, the following suggestions may make the experience easier to tolerate:

- Know your limits – if you feel as though you will feel more stress than enjoyment, decline the invitation. Do consider however if attending events with friends and family may help to take your mind of things for a short time.
- Make a plan in advance – if you are attending a holiday gathering, find a quiet place to spend a few moments alone if you need to. Plan an excuse to use in case you feel overwhelmed and need to leave.
- Share your feelings with friends and family – your loved ones will know best how to support you if you can express to them what you need.
- Not everyone understands what you are going through, you may hear comments that are hurtful or insensitive. Know that most often

these people make comments with the best of intentions, but without them understanding exactly what you are going through it's hard for them to know the right things to say. Often times they will say nothing as they are concerned that they may upset you, when in reality they are worried about being uncomfortable by you being upset. What you need to express to them is that you want desperately to talk about your baby and hear your baby's name.

- Reach out to others that understand – it helps to talk to someone that can truly understand what you are going through. Connect with other baby loss families through support groups or in online chat groups. If your faith is important to you, attend extra services. Don't be afraid to ask for help from a counselor or mental health professional.

The other way to cope with the holidays, instead of skipping Christmas, may be to start some new holiday traditions. As you journey through your grief, your needs may change. You may try something one year and decide to change it and try something new the next year. With time you may even decide to renew old traditions. Most importantly do what feels right to you and allows you to honor your baby and incorporate your baby's memory into your new reality. Here are some ideas for honoring your baby's memory at Christmas:

- Ornaments – have an ornament engraved with your baby's name on it, add a new ornament each year in memory of your baby. I invite you to attend our annual Christmas healing hands workshop on Saturday December 15th from 1-3pm where you can make an ornament in memory of your baby.
- Dedicate a tree specifically to your baby – I did this several years ago in memory of my angels, Loren and Brooklynn. Every year I decorate my angel tree to honor my babies, and each year I add a new ornament that I make or buy for them. Consider having a theme to your tree: angels, butterflies, drag-

onflies or something meaningful to you. Tie ribbons on your tree, blue for boys, pink for girls or white if you don't know the gender of your baby. Search the internet for baby loss awareness ornaments.

- Hang a stocking for you baby – write a letter to your baby and tuck it inside the stocking, invite loved ones to do the same. Add a new note each year and save them to read every year. Consider the Random Acts of Kindness stocking idea that is shared in the newsletter.
- Buy a gift in memory of your baby that you can donate to a local hospital or needy child – buy an age appropriate gift for the age your baby would be. This can become an annual tradition. Include a note that the gift is being given in memory of your baby.
- Make a donation in memory of your baby to a hospital, charity or program designed to help families after the loss of a baby.
- Give your baby a special signature – feel free to sign holiday cards with a designation for your baby like a stamp of an angel or baby feet, it may help you to know that your baby is not being forgotten and being remembered by others.
- Update friends and family by sharing how you are feeling – if you typically send out a letter with holiday cards, let them know how you are coping. It's ok to be honest and to share what you are needing from them.
- If you are inviting family or friends over, display keepsakes for you baby (pictures, scrapbooks, ornaments, etc.)
- Light a candle in memory of your baby.

Whether you decide to skip Christmas, create new holiday traditions or attempt to celebrate Christmas like you have done in years past, I wish you peace, love and hope. May hope for the future and the love of family and friends bring comfort to you this Christmas. Please know that your angel is smiling down on you from above wishing you love and happiness.

Paying it Forward

We would like to extend a huge thank you to Alex Fayed, the son of one of our Angel Whispers families Amanda and Gamil Fayed.

Alex is a 12 year old young man with a huge heart. His football coach challenged him and his teammates to take \$20 that the coach gave them and pay it forward to someone. Alex immediately knew what he wanted to do.

He approached family and friends and grew his \$20 into several hundred dollars which allowed him to Pay it Forward to Angel Whispers in memory of his baby brother Russell who was stillborn in January 2009. Alex approached Build-a-Bear with his idea and with their support, Alex donated 30 Build-a-Bears to Angel Whispers so that we can help to fill the empty arms of families after the loss of their baby. He also donated yarn to the Misericordia hospital so that they can have small hats made for the premature babies born. Amanda and Gamil's Rainbow baby Lora was born prematurely in September 2010.

If you are a family living in the Edmonton area and did not receive a teddy bear in the hospital after the loss of your baby, please contact Lori-Ann at angelwhispers@familiesfirstsociety.ca so that Angel Whispers can give you one of the bears donated by Alex.



Thank you Alex for your generous donation, what a heartfelt gift to make in honor of your baby brother!

One Christmas Wish

I guess if I could make just one Christmas wish,
I would wish I could see you.
To hold, to snuggle, to just kiss,
This is something
I'd really like to do.

My arms ache for my baby Girl,
Who will always remain just that.
To never grow and experience joy,
I wish I knew where you were at.

Why is it God thought he needed
you more than I,

And why is it wishes
can't come true?
I am just an aching heart
who can only ask why,
And a mother who can't
let go of you.

Please God grant me this
one Christmas wish,
If just for a minute, an hour or a day.
She is someone I really need and miss,
What more must I say?

Precious Moments

by Courtney Barnes

The morning of February 8, 2012 dawned uneventfully, but would prove to be one of the most eventful days of my life. I felt slightly uncomfortable in the morning, but by lunchtime I was pretty sure I was in early labour which was exciting due to the fact that with my son I went over my “due date” by a week, and here it was still two days before the “due date” of our second child.

I went about our daily business as usual, and waited somewhat impatiently for my scheduled midwife appointment at 2pm. As I had some positioning issues with my older son, when my midwife came into the room, she found me head down on my hands and knees in the middle of the floor rocking my hips. It must have looked strange, but if you can't do that sort of thing in the midwife's office, where can you do it? In any case it gave her pause, but we had much to talk about as she had received some devastating personal news the night before and would be having to fly out of the country for a week or so. We discussed backup plans for quite awhile before we decided to finish up with a quick check of baby at the end of the appointment. That quick check revealed some concerns so we decided it would be best to head to the hospital for further investigation. Due to the midwife's personal situation, our back up midwife (who I had also met for a few appointments earlier on in the pregnancy) met us at the hospital.

While waiting at the hospital for the ultrasound, I kept an eye on the clock and realized my contractions were now about 15 minutes apart. The hospital ultrasound revealed there was indeed a complication, so after some discussion we decided to head home, get my son safely to his grandparents, have a bite to eat, pack a bag and return to the hospital later for the birth. We weren't home very long before I had the passing thought that “Oh, I might have to take some Tylenol soon to deal with these cramps.” Obviously, I was not thinking very clearly at that point, but



soon came to my senses and realized baby was coming much more quickly than his or her older sibling had! We called both our midwife and doula to let them know we were headed back to the hospital sooner rather than later and headed for the car. Fortuitously, just before we headed out the door, I saw the TENS machine I had rented from my chiropractor and had the thought that I should get my husband to put it on me in case labour picked up even more and I needed it in car. Thank goodness I did as it made a world of difference for the 20 minute car ride and walk back to the L&D ward. Although I had forgotten how naturally high I get on labour endorphins!

The midwife had called ahead to the hospital, so they were expecting us when we arrived, but it was still amazing how quickly they moved as soon as I mentioned I was feeling a little “pushy”. On the way to the room I mentioned to the nurse that I really wanted to get in the shower but upon arriving in the room I realized that an electric TENS machine and water would not mix very well and was not giving up the TENS for anything at that point!

I laboured for a few minutes standing up beside the bed, and before I could strip off any clothing or even my shoes, my water broke in a huge gush. The nurse helped me get my bottoms

off and I laboured some more standing up before another nurse (there were two in the room) repeated an earlier suggestion to get up on the bed. I had no desire to labour on my back, so I obliged her with getting onto the bed, only on my hands and knees. I was still focused on doing everything in my power to ensure baby was in a good position for the delivery.

At that point the first nurse asked to do an internal check and although I knew instinctively how far along I was already, I consented as I felt they also needed some idea of how far along I was. I was very grateful that the one nurse was totally prepared to perform the check while I was on my hands and knees even though the other nurse voiced some doubt as to whether it could be done in that position. I don't know if they told me I was completely dilated but I was just totally following my body's cues at that point so it wouldn't have mattered one way or another. This baby was on its way OUT!

As my midwife still hadn't arrived at that point (this was only maybe 5 minutes after arriving at the hospital), they called in the doctor on call to check on me. When he arrived, I was already starting to push on my own and he told me to turn over so he could check on things. Normally I think I would've

Continued on page 5

argued with his suggestion but I knew it would make things easier for him and to be honest it didn't feel like a horrible idea anymore so I complied. Things get a bit hazy from there. I know my doula arrived first and the doctors and nurses all started to back off, thinking she was the midwife and would take over, until that misconception was quickly corrected. I also remember the doctor asking me at one point if my midwife was going to deliver my baby and snapping that she might "If she gets here in time!", with an implied "Until then deal with it!"

She did end up arriving just in time, but so close to the wire that I believe it was the doctor who actually caught my baby. Considering we left for the hospital at 7:45 and baby ended up being born at 8:32, I was impressed she made it at all! My doula told me after the fact that she actually put her hand out just in case she had to catch the baby as the doctor was distracted by trying to get the midwife up to speed. In any case, our midwife took the baby for a quick check while the doctor took care of things on my end. As soon as possible though, baby was placed skin on skin and we had some precious snuggle time. After much anticipation we finally had our beautiful Catherine Elizabeth!

The doctor and nurses cleared out very quickly once the midwife was there, and we were left to admire our beautiful baby girl in peace. Eventually I handed her off to her papa so I could get that now much-needed shower. As requested, they waited for me to give Catherine her bath, and I got to inspect every inch of her as I gently washed the birth residue from her tiny eyes, ears and between her little toes. Eventually the midwife weighed and measured her – 8lbs 7oz, 21 ½” – before once more allowing us to snuggle and adore.

Now you may remember how I mentioned there was a complication, and be wondering what it was? The fact is that we discovered at the midwife appointment - and had confirmed by the ultrasound earlier in the day - that there was no heartbeat. Our precious

baby was gone before she arrived (even before we knew she was a she rather than a he). The bit of time we had with her after she was born was all the time we would ever have with her here on earth.

I originally returned to the hospital thinking I wanted an epidural as I was already in so much mental pain that I had no desire to add the physical labour pains. In the end, things progressed much too quickly for that and I was gifted with the knowledge that I could and did do everything possible for my baby. As heart-shattering as it was to give birth to a stillborn baby it was amazingly empowering to know I could and did do it on my own. (While my son's birth was not traumatic it did involve many more interventions and an eventual ventouse birth.)

And as much as I thought I wanted the drugs, if I had had an epidural, I wouldn't have been able to have my shower, bathe my daughter (the only opportunity I would ever have to physically care for her) and be at her side for every moment that we had. I am thankful that the few memories I have were experienced with a mind and body clear of any external influence.

I sincerely wish still birth were a thing of the past but the fact is that 1 in 4 women will experience a still birth, miscarriage or early infant loss. In our case, everything was perfectly fine until it wasn't. The night before she was kicking away in my belly. Then the next day she was gone with no explanation. The doctor believed it may have been a cord accident but with the evidence at hand my midwives (and we) believe that it was more likely due to a spontaneous placental abruption.

Despite that tragic statistic, or perhaps because of it, I hope that pregnant women are able to push back the anxieties that come with even the most mundane pregnancy and instead cherish every moment they have with the small life growing inside of them. In the case that you are one of the tremendously unlucky few, it may be helpful to read the suggestions below on how to create precious memories with your baby.

An excerpt from 'Honouring Your Baby' by Lori-Ann Huot, taken from

the Angel Whispers Fall 2012 Newsletter (used with permission)

For families that lose their baby, while at home or in the hospital, the following suggestions may help you to create memories with your baby. This time with your baby is short but precious and you will look back at your moments together and cherish those memories with your baby:

- Hold your baby in your arms. Spend time together as a family; this is a chance that you will never have again.
- Bathe your baby.
- Dress your baby. Bring a special outfit or blanket to dress your baby in; for earlier losses a special scarf may be used. Many hospitals have small blankets, hats and clothing for tiny babies.
- Take pictures of your baby with you and your family members. You may want to include special keepsakes in the pictures such as stuffed animals or wedding rings. There are professional photographers with an organization called 'Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep' that will come to the hospital to do a photo session with you and your baby at no cost to you.
- Ask for footprints and identification bands. Even the tiniest feet make prints that will last forever.
- Ask for a lock of your baby's hair.
- You may want to invite family and friends that are close to you to visit. Sharing your experience with loved ones will help them create memories of your baby and allow them to be there to support you and help them to deal with their grief.
- Planning a funeral or memorial service can be helpful and give friends and family an opportunity to remember your baby and provide much needed support to you.

My First Christmas in Heaven

Author Unknown

I see the countless Christmas trees
around
the world below
With tiny lights like heaven's stars,
reflecting
on the snow.
The sight is so spectacular, please
wipe away that tear,
For I am spending Christmas with
Jesus Christ this year.

I hear the many Christmas songs that
people hold so dear,
But the music can't compare with the
Christmas choir up here.
I have no words to tell you the joy
their voices bring,
For it is beyond description, the way
the angels sing.

I know how much you miss me. I see
the pain
inside your heart.
But I am not so far away. We really
aren't apart.
So be happy for me, dear ones. You
know I hold you near.
Be glad I'm spending Christmas with
Jesus Christ this year.

I send you each a special gift from
my heavenly
home above.
I send you each a memory of my
undying love.
After all LOVE is the gift more pre-
cious than pure gold.
It was always most important in the
stories Jesus told.

Please love and keep each other, as
our Father said to do,
For I can't count the blessings or the
love He has for you.
Have a Merry Christmas and wipe
away that tear.
Remember...
I am spending Christmas with Jesus
Christ this year.

Upcoming Meetings:

Baby Loss Support Group - for families who have lost a baby during pregnancy or after birth. Meetings are held on the first Sunday of each month from 7-9 p.m. in Sherwood Park at the Family and Community Services offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive. December 2, 2012, January 7, 2013, February 3, 2013, March 3, 2013

Subsequent Pregnancy Support Group - for families who are trying to conceive or expecting again after experiencing a previous loss. Meetings are held from 7-9 p.m. at the Family and Community Services offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park. December 9, 2012, January 14, 2013, February 10, 2013, March 10, 2013

Healing Hands Workshop - an opportunity to remember your baby through healing activities such as scrapbooking, card making and other crafts. From 1-3 p.m. December 15, 2012, January 26, 2013, February 23, 2013, March 16, 2013 at the FCSS offices in Sherwood Park.

For all meetings and workshops please contact Lori-Ann to register (780) 998-5595 ext. 225.

Thank you!

- to Strathcona Family and Community Services for allowing us use of their meeting space.
- to Betty Dean for helping with our newsletter!
- to Allison Smith for her assistance with our website!
- to the mom's who decorate our memory boxes and to all our volunteers!

and for the following donations:

- to Alex Fayed for his donation of teddy bears
- books for our Angel Whispers library in memory of Emily Williams; donation made by Christina Baines in memory of Nicholas Craig Applin
- to the following for their generous financial contributions:
 - United Way
 - Dow
 - Mayor Linda Osinchuk and Strathcona County Council

Thank you to everyone for your generous donations which help to sustain the services provided by Angel Whispers.

Congratulations!

*Alexander Angeles MacQuarrie
Born on September 22, 2012*

*weighing 8lbs 9oz to proud parents Jennifer and Don MacQuarrie
Big brother RJ is celebrating with the angels!*

*Eli David William Hromota
Born November 10, 2012*

*weighing 9lbs 2oz to proud parents Amanda and Kevin Hromota
Big brother Columbus is smiling down from heaven!*

In Memory of our New Angels

Jaxson Kane Reinholz

Morgan Reese Sewell
February 12, 2011

Jordan Quinn Sewell
February 23, 2012

Lucas Ames
April 1, 2010

Lyric Stephenson
June 13, 2012

Sebastian Kayne Glant
August 16, 2011

Macie Sue English Little
August 17, 2012

Allan Cason Fox Cordingley
August 19, 2012

Aria Michael DuChene
September 10, 2012

Tossie Adaline Hill
September 10, 2012

Baby Ferchau
October 3, 2012

Dejuva Beartys Holdorf
October 12, 2012

*All angels can be found on our website at:
www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers*

Please call or email us if you would like to submit your baby's name to be remembered. If we have forgotten to remember your baby on this page, or have misspelled your angel's name, please let us know.

Christmas memorial services:

When Holidays Hurt: Finding your way when you're grieving

Date: Saturday December 1, 2012

Time: 10am-11:15am

Location: Park Memorial Reception Centre 11015-101 St. Edmonton

For more information, contact Linda Aris at the Edmonton Bereavement-Centre at (780)454-1194

The Grieving Parents Society of Edmonton Annual Christmas Candlelight Service

Date: Sunday December 2, 2012

Time: 7:00pm

Location: Knox Metropolitan United Church 8307-109 St. Edmonton

St. Albert Bereavement Fellowship "Remembering Our Loved Ones at Christmas"

Date: Wednesday December 12, 2012

Time: 7:30pm

Location: 7 Tache Street, St. Albert

Parent Care Candlelight Service

Date: Thursday December 20, 2012

Time: 7:30pm

Location: Chapel at the Misericordia Hospital

Please call (780)989-5040 and leave a message with the spelling of your baby (ies) names and if you would like a pink, blue or white candle

Reception to follow: Donations of baking graciously accepted

Angel Whispers receives some funding from the Government of Alberta's Community Spirit Program, as well as from many generous individuals.

Thank you for your continued support.

**Government
of Alberta** ■

One Christmas Wish

I guess if I could make just one
Christmas wish,
I would wish I could see you.
To hold, to snuggle, to just kiss,
This is something
I'd really like to do.

My arms ache for my baby girl,
Who will always remain just that.
To never grow and experience joy,
I wish I knew where you were at.

Why is it God thought he needed
you more than I,
And why is it wishes
can't come true?
I am just an aching heart
who can only ask why,
And a mother who can't
let go of you.

Please God grant me this
one Christmas wish,
If just for a minute, an hour
or a day.
She is someone I really need
and miss,
What more must I say?

Healing Opportunities:

Angel Whispers Holiday Open House and Healing Hands workshop

Date: Saturday December 15, 2012

Time: 1-3pm

Location: FCSS offices, 2nd floor
401 Festival Lane Sherwood Park

We will be making Christmas ornaments in memory of our babies.

To RSVP or for more information, please contact Lori-Ann at (780)998-5595 ext. 225

Yoga for Grief Support: Yoga specifically designed for people who have suffered the death of a loved one.

Classes involve yoga postures, breathing and meditation along with educational and supportive topics related to bereavement support. Guided by Sandy Ayre, and Occupational Therapist and Certified Yoga Instructor. For more information and upcoming class dates, please visit - www.yogaforgriefsupport.com.

Visit us on Facebook!

Facebook is a fast and easy way for us to send out meeting reminders and notifications about our healing hands workshops, as well as what is new in our community.

You are also able to make a donation to our program in memory of your baby through facebook.

Please visit:

www.causes.com/angelwhispers or <http://www.facebook.com/loriannangelwhispers>

Angel Bears For Sale

We are once again selling our angel bears for the holidays:

- small bears \$5
- medium bears \$7
- large bears \$10.

These are lovely to hang on the tree or to give as gifts.

If you are interested in a bear, contact Lori-Ann at (780) 998-5595 ext.225 or email angelwhispers@familiesfirst-society.ca.

Random Acts of Kindness

In memory of your baby

A beautiful idea was shared with me from one of our Angel Whispers mommy's Courtney Barnes who came across this idea on the following website – www.thealchemyofgrief.blogspot.ca. Courtney is now sharing this idea in memory of her daughter Catherine and is asking her friends and family to participate in this project to honor Catherine.

Families should be sharing in the excitement of Christmas morning by watching their little one opening their stocking and presents; instead families that have lost a baby are left to mourn their precious little ones, making Christmas a difficult time of year.

The family that created this idea, Jenalea and Marc, were facing their first Christmas after losing their baby boy. They decided to ask friends and family to help fill their little ones stocking with things that would help create a legacy for their baby boy Marcus. They challenged their loved ones to do a random act of kindness for someone leading up to Christmas in memory of their baby boy, and then asked that when the random act of kindness was complete that they email a short description of what they did. In the subject line they asked that ``Do Not Open Random Acts of Kindness``. They would print the email out and put it into baby Marcus' stocking. Christmas morning instead of watching baby Marcus open his stocking they would open it and read about all the good things their loved ones did in memory of him.

What an incredible legacy created in memory of a much loved and missed baby boy; imagine the waves of random acts of kindness that could be spread across our world if everyone decided to pay it forward with love and kindness in memory of babies never forgotten who's memory will forever live on in our hearts.

You might want to check out these web sites:

- www.facesofloss.com
- www.grieveoutloud.org
- www.nationalshare.org/creating-memories.html - nationalshare.org serves those who have experienced the death of a baby due to early pregnancy loss, stillbirth, or in the first few months of life.

New Year's Resolutions For Bereaved Parents

I Resolve:

*That I will grieve as much and for as long as I feel like grieving,
and that I will not let others put a time table on my grief.*

*That I will grieve in whatever way I feel like grieving, and I will ignore those who try to tell me
what I should or should not be feeling and how I should or should not be behaving.*

*That I will cry whenever and wherever I feel like crying, and that I will not hold back my tears just because
someone else feels I should be "brave" or "getting better" or "healing by now."*

*That I will talk about my baby as often as I want to, and that I will not let others turn me off just because
they can't deal with their own feelings.*

*That I will not expect family and friends to know how I feel, understanding that one who has not lost a child
cannot possibly know how I feel.*

*That I will not blame myself for my baby's death, and I will constantly remind myself that I did the best job I
could. But when feelings of guilt are overwhelming, I will remind myself that this is a normal part
of the grief process and it will pass.*

That I will not be afraid or ashamed to seek professional help if I feel it is necessary.

I will keep the truth in my heart--the truth that my child is always with me in spirit.

*That I will try to eat, sleep, and exercise every day in order to give my body strength it will need
to help me cope with my grief.*

*To know that I am not losing my mind and I will remind myself that loss of memory, feelings of disorientation,
lack of energy, and a sense of vulnerability are all a normal part of the grief process.*

To know that I will heal, even though it will take a long time.

To let myself heal and not feel guilty about not feeling better sooner.

*To remind myself that the grief process is circuitous--that is, I will not make steady upward progress. And
when I find myself slipping back into the old moods of despair and depression, I will tell myself that "slipping
backward" is also a normal part of the mourning process, and that these moods, too, will pass.*

*To try to be happy about something for some part of every day, knowing that at first, I may have to force
myself to think cheerful thoughts so eventually they can become a habit.*

*That I will reach out at times and try to help someone else, knowing that helping others will help me to get
over my depression.*

That even though my baby has died, I will opt for life, knowing that is what my child would want me to do.

~Adapted From the Brooksville/Spring Hill FL. TCF Newsletter~

Helping A Loved One Cope Through The Holidays

by: Lori-Ann Huot

For a family that has lost a baby, the holidays can be a difficult time of the year. The holidays should be a time to spend with loved ones, and for them it is another reminder of their precious baby that they should be enjoying Christmas with.

Listed below are a few suggestions on how to help your loved ones through the holidays:

- Validate the family's loss by acknowledging their baby. Send them a note letting them know that you understand that this is a difficult time of year for them after losing their baby and that you are thinking about them. Mention the baby's name, families want desperately for their baby's to be remembered.
- Give them a gift in memory of their baby: a personalized ornament, an angel, a teddy bear, engraved picture frame or jewelry.
- Make a donation to a charity in memory of their baby
- Offer to attend a Holiday Memorial Service with them; you will find a few listed in this newsletter or on our website – www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers.
- Offer to attend holiday get togethers with them. Having an understanding friend to talk to can make them less stressful.
- Deliver a few meals or holiday treats to them personally.

If your friend is more private about her loss, you may want to consider a different gift idea:

- A gift certificate to a spa – she likely hasn't taken much time for

The Night Before Christmas

Shared by: Janet Gilmour

It's the night before Christmas, we're all filled with joy,
except when we think of you, little boy.
The stockings are hung by the chimney with care,
and in our hearts it's as if you were here.
My children are sleeping, in their bedrooms they lay,
but we're still filled with grief for our baby that died.
You see, this Christmas you would have been two,
But every Christmas I know we'll miss you.
As I wrap up the presents my thought are on you,
and what we'd have bought if you were here, too.
A car, a ball, a red fire truck
or maybe a rabbit's foot to bring you good luck
The tree is all trimmed with bright coloured balls,
and decorations hang on all of the walls.
It looks so pretty - - I wonder if you see
Your Christmas ball we've hung on the tree.
I made it for you before you were here,
Not knowing I'd hang it with eyes filled with tears.
Tomorrow is Christmas; I'll try not to be sad;
I'll count all my blessings and try to be glad,
You've not a part of our future - - you were a part of our past
and someday I know we'll be together at last.

herself recently and it may be a nice relaxing opportunity for her.

- Offer to take her out for an afternoon, whether it is for lunch, a movie or shopping

If your loved one cannot bear the thought of facing Christmas and doesn't want to decorate or participate in traditional holiday activities, you can still be helpful.

- Support her decision not to celebrate or to change their holiday traditions.
- Invite her for a quiet Christmas at your home, sometimes doing something different can be enough to get through a stressful time. Spending time together is the true meaning of Christmas.

The most important thing you can do for your loved one is to be a friend and ask what they need from you and what you can do to help. They may not know exactly what they need, but knowing that you are there to support them will mean so much.

Remembering

by Elizabeth Dent

*Go ahead and mention my child.
The one that died, you know.
Don't worry about hurting me
further.
The depth of my pain doesn't show.
Don't worry about making me cry.
I'm already crying inside.
Help me to heal by releasing
The tears that I try to hide.
I'm hurt when you just keep silent,
Pretending he didn't exist.
I'd rather you mention my child,
Knowing that he has been missed.
You asked me how I was doing.
I say "pretty good" or "fine".
But healing is something ongoing.
I feel it will take a lifetime.*

The Month Before Christmas

Shared by: Julie Aspinall

Twas the month before Christmas and I dreaded the days,
That I knew I was facing,
the holiday craze.
The stores were all filled with
holiday lights,
In hopes of drawing customers by day and by night.
As others were making their
holiday plans,
My heart was breaking, I couldn't understand.
I had lost my child a few years before,
And I knew what my holiday
had in store.

When out of nowhere, there arose such a sound,
I sprang to my feet and was
looking around,
Away to the window I flew
like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and
threw up the sash

The sight that I saw took my
breath away,
And my tears turned to smiles in
the light of the day.
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a cluster of butterflies
fluttering near.
With beauty and grace they
performed a dance,
I knew in a moment this wasn't
by chance.

The hope that they gave me was a sign from above,
That my child was still near me and that I was loved.
The message they brought was my holiday gift,
And I cried when I saw them in spite of myself.

As I knelt closer to get a better view,
One allowed me to pet it, as if it knew -
That I needed the touch of its fragile wings,
To help me get through the holiday scene.

In the days that followed I carried the thought,
Of the message the butterflies left in my heart -
That no matter what happens or what days lie ahead,
Our children are with us - they're not really dead.

Yes, the message of the butterflies still rings in my ears,
A message of hope - a message
so dear.

And I imagined they sang as they flew out of sight,
'To all bereaved parents - We love you tonight!'



Families First Society is a non profit organization established in 1996. We are directed by a volunteer board and work in partnership with many community agencies to offer a variety of programs and services. Our programs promote positive parenting and early childhood development.

Families First Society offers parent education, programs for young children to learn and play, and family support services, as well as information and referral to other programs and services in the community.

Fort Saskatchewan Families First Society (main office)
 10302A – 99 Avenue T8L 1Y2
 or Box 3285 T8L 2T3
 Fort Saskatchewan, AB
 Parent Link Centre

Phone: 780-998-5595

Fax: 780-998-5503

Angel Whispers was created by three moms in the Edmonton area who experienced the loss of their babies: one shortly after birth, one through miscarriage, and one through still birth.

It is a program of Families First Society of Fort Saskatchewan, a non-profit charity funded primarily through individual donations.

Donations, in memory of your baby, are acknowledged in our newsletter at your request. Charitable donation receipts are issued upon request.

Angel Whispers provides:

- baby loss support group
- Healing Hands groups
- subsequent pregnancy support group
- resource lending library
- quarterly newsletter
- special care packages
- Memory Box program
- one-on-one and email support
- birthcertificate keepsakes
- website with memorial star page www.angelwhispers.ca/angelwhispers

Angel Whispers Care Packages

Angel Whispers sends out care packages to grieving families. Each package includes a special memento and strategies for coping. Birth Certificate keepsakes are also available.

If you would like to receive or send a care package, please call us.

Pregnancy After Loss Support Group

For families who are joyfully and anxiously pregnant again after losing a baby. Meetings are on the 2nd Sunday of each month from 7-9 p.m. at the Family and Community Services offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive, Sherwood Park.

December 9, 2012, January 14, 2013, February 10, 2013, March 10, 2013

Baby Loss Group

For families who have lost a baby during pregnancy or after birth. Meetings are held on the first Sunday of each month from 7-9 p.m. in Sherwood Park at the Family andCommunity Services offices at 2001 Sherwood Drive.

December 2, 2012, January 7, 2013, February 3, 2013, March 3, 2013

For meeting information, or to receive our newsletter or a special care package, please call 780.998.5595, ext. 225.

Angel Whispers is a non-denominational program. However we honor and respect the individual beliefs of our families.